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EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM ON GENERAL CROPS MARKETING

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The educational program on general crops marketing covers food and feed grains, cotton, oil seeds, forage crops, tobacco, peanuts, sugar and other minor field crops. It also includes work on forest products.

The scope of the problem in all food and fiber marketing was indicated in an article written by John H. Davis and appearing in the January-February 1956 issue of the Harvard Business Review. He points out that farmers receive about 30 billion dollars from the sale of food and fiber production. Business firms in turn assemble, store, process, package and distribute the end product for an aggregate bill of about 75 billion dollars.

The General Crops Branch and its counterparts in the State extension services have responsibility for the marketing educational work for about 30 percent of all the food and fiber production sold by farmers, but farmers as well as business firms have an interest in marketing beyond the farm line fences. Lower costs of assembling, storing, processing, packaging and distributing these crops to consumers, in a form and of a quality most useful, is always a vital marketing problem for both the business firms and farmers. The program for general crops must also be of assistance with problems of firms handling these commodities.

For a number of crops government programs and price support operations are dominant factors in the marketing situation.

What is Being Done by The States

Grain, Seed and Other Field Crops.--There are about 22 States with marketing educational projects on grain, seed and other field crops. There are only 9 of these States with one or more marketing specialists devoting full-time to these projects. In 11 additional States specialists are working part-time on grain, seed and other field crops marketing. In other States some work is done by personnel working as general marketing specialists with responsibility for a number of crops, livestock and functional marketing problems.

Educational work in this commodity field covers a wide range of activities and problems. Grain storage, sanitation, outlook and market information, elevator business organization and management training schools, grain grading schools, development of marketing and processing facilities are some of the more important phases of work being done.

Cotton.-Currently 7 States are conducting programs in cotton marketing and ginning. Some of these 7 States and several others also employ agricultural engineers who work either full or part-time on the technical aspects of gin operations. Although this is technical work it is properly considered a part of the marketing program.

The major aspects of the present cotton marketing program include work with producers on quality improvement, using cotton grading and market information services and aiding ginneries with their technical and economic problems in ginning and buying cottonseed. Very little marketing work is being done with local cotton buyers, warehousemen, compresses, cotton merchants, mills and the other elements of the trade. Up to this point practically no consumer marketing information work is being done on cotton.

General.-This includes a wide variety of miscellaneous activities and work being done on a part-time or single shot problem basis by marketing specialists who have responsibility for general marketing work. In many cases this work is done by an extension economist who has no commodity assignment and works on the basis of dealing with the problems at hand as they arise. The marketing work done by these specialists often deals with commodities such as grain, cotton, seed or some other crop but there is no fixed pattern.

Forestry.-Forestry marketing projects under AMA are operating in 7 States. These are widely distributed - one in New England, one in the far West and 4 in the Southern States. The main emphasis in these projects is teaching farmers how to market forest products to the best advantage. This involves kinds and types of products, values, market demand and related information. A few States are stepping up their work with forest products industries on improving utilization and technology of processing and market development.

Our Contribution to the States

Assistance is given the State specialists and their programs on general crops marketing by providing a liaison with other Federal agencies' research and operating programs and by helping them when possible to plan and execute their own projects. In addition, specific major work problem areas peculiar to commodities may be of interest. The more important of these are:

1. Utilization.-Recently a program has been developed in cooperation with the Agricultural Research Service to use specialists whose primary responsibility is to insure a more rapid and widespread dissemination of utilization research findings from the laboratories at Peoria, Illinois, and New Orleans, Louisiana. A Federal specialist is now working in cooperation with each laboratory.
2. Grain quality.-The Federal Extension Service has employed a specialist to assist the winter wheat States extension specialists to develop a more effective program for marketing hard red winter wheat which has the qualities most desirable for milling and baking.

